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ABSTRACT

The Discovery Room is a mental health oriented primary school intervention for children with learning and behavioral difficulties in the classroom which has been steadily modified over a four-year period through accommodation to real-life needs of an inner city school. In the Discovery Room, a special teacher works with children singly or in pairs for two half-hour sessions a week in a special room. Improvement in academic and social functioning is fostered by strengthening the child's self-image through work with varied materials and imaginative play in the context of a close, supportive relationship between the Discovery Room teacher and the child, and positive communication with parents and classroom teacher. The Discovery Room was initiated by university staff for often overlooked children who were "turned off" to school learning although they were not hard to "manage" in the classroom. Through utilizing some of its unanticipated consequences, the intervention has evolved in scope to include the classroom as a whole. The next phase calls for a core group of classroom teachers to be trained in the Discovery Room approach so that they can take part in constructing a classroom model. Thus the attempt will be made to move from secondary to primary intervention. (Author)

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The Discovery Room -- Developing an Approach for Teachers to Help Children with Problems in Primary School

Marjorie G. Janis and Joan Costello

The discovery-room approach is a mental health oriented, primary school intervention for children with learning and behavioral difficulties which has been steadily modified over a four-year period through accommodation to real-life needs of an inner-city school.

Epidemic school failure

School is the first major social institution which the American child confronts in the world beyond the shelter of the family. In this huge mysterious place among hordes of strange children, the young child must stand alone and be tested for personal adequacy through fulfilling new demands made by unfamiliar adults. A large number of children emerge from this confrontation of their early school years scathed by defeat and scarred with the learning that they cannot succeed in school. Estimates of school maladaptation for elementary school children reach 30% (Glidewell and Swallow, 1969); the estimates of later school failure mount even higher: "23% of school children are failing to graduate, and another large segment graduate as functional illiterates" (Harris, 1975). Certainly the causes of school failure are complex. In part they derive from inequities and injustices in the society at large that deprive many children of basic requirements

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for optimal development (Comer, 1972; Hobbs, 1975). Nevertheless, it is the schools at present that bear the brunt of responsibility to make good the American dream: to give every child the opportunity to develop to his or her full potential.

In America, school success has become more and more a prerequisite for success in life. Not "making it" in school, especially for children from low-income families, severely limits the chances for becoming productive, well-functioning adult citizens. Yet our schools are rife with failure (Greer, 1972). Even in the primary school there are many children whose progress is far behind their capabilities. Despite assurances to the contrary, only a few "catch up" as they "mature." Among the underachieving children are those whose classroom behavior is most troublesome and worrisome to teachers. Early learning and behavioral difficulties interact and intensify one another. The child who has trouble with school tasks is likely to act up or withdraw in the classroom. The child who misbehaves constantly or is very shy is unlikely to concentrate on school work. Patterns of school failure form rapidly and, if they are not reversed, harden and trap the children within their confines. Many children "turn off" to school learning; others never discover how to connect to the school world. Such children are at great risk of alienation from school -- an institution within which they may fail, be excluded, or finally drop out.

Schools need more effective means for implementing responsive teaching which will stem the tide of failure (Coles, 1970). The discovery-room approach addresses this problem. It is an approach which helps children and their teachers to discover ways in which the child's interests and the school's interest can be brought together to mutual benefit -- for the realization of the child's potentialities to become a successful student.

The Discovery Room

The Discovery Room was developed as part of a multi-faceted program* to improve education at two inner-city elementary schools (Costello, 1973). It was founded in response to our observation (as psychologist [Costello] and resource teacher [Janis] in the program) that even in the classrooms of excellent teachers there were children who drifted from or resisted new learning but who were neither mentally retarded nor severely emotionally disturbed. Most of these children were unsure of themselves, at least in school. More often they had a low opinion of themselves altogether and were uncomfortable with peers or adults, sometimes both. They survived in school by avoiding school tasks and relationships or by one or another aggressive countermeasure. Inevitable time constraints and the demands of teaching twenty to thirty children made it unlikely that a teacher would "discover" how to reach and teach such pupils in positive ways which would foster personal growth and learning.

*The Baldwin-King Schools Program was a joint effort of the Yale University Child Study Center, the New Haven school system, and the parents, staff and children of Baldwin School and Martin Luther King School. It was supported for five years (1968-1973) by the Ford Foundation. Parent participation, professional development of staff, and application of child development and mental health knowledge to school issues were among the central tenets of the program.

Most primary school children form the central relationship to their classroom teachers rather quickly each year. If the opportunity is given, it is often quite a close one -- bearing some resemblances to a child-parent relationship, resemblances which lessen over the years as the teacher-child relationship takes on more independent qualities. A positive teacher-child relationship gives support, safety, positive self-feeling and a model to imitate. With the teacher as ally, a child has a much better chance of negotiating the complexities of early school life and attaining the status and identity of successful school student. For those children who are inhibited out of fear or mistrust, or who form an angry, negative relationship with their teacher, this status and identity are much harder to attain.

From the teachers' side of the relationship, it often looks as if the reasons for children not doing well in school come from outside the classroom -- from background causes or individual make-up. Teachers tend to see their own relationship to each child as something "given" which they can rarely change without prior transformations in the child.

In the discovery-room approach, the teacher-child relationship is itself the means by which positive change is initiated. Improvement in academic and social functioning in primary school is fostered by strengthening the child's self-esteem through work with varied materials and imaginative play in the context of a close, supportive teacher-child relationship. In

the model that was developed, the Discovery Room teacher works with children singly or in pairs for two half-hour sessions a week in a special room called the Discovery Room (Janis and Costello, 1975). The room is stocked with a wide variety of materials, toys, games, and books set up to invite exploratory and imaginative activities. The children selected for the Discovery Room are those whom their classroom teachers view as needing help for learning and behavioral difficulties. (This does not include the rare child with extremely serious intellectual or emotional problems for whom services are sought elsewhere.) Parents are always involved in the decision, are invited to visit and give their consent before sessions begin. Sessions range from a few months to a school year. The Discovery Room teacher, the classroom teacher and the parents communicate frequently about the progress the child is making.

How effective has the Discovery Room been in helping children to overcome learning and behavioral difficulties? No definitive answer can be given as yet, but preliminary observations are highly promising. Eighty children in all -- from kindergarten through fourth grade -- came to the Discovery Room over the two and one-half years it was in full operation in a K-4 school with approximately three hundred pupils. Although no systematic data were obtained during this developmental phase of the discovery-room approach, the general impression of staff was that about half the children improved academically and socially; another quarter changed socially although not in school work. The remainder did not change in any notable way. The next phase will be to determine by a

systematic field study whether the discovery-room intervention has the impact it appeared to have during the time it was developed as a school service within a complex of services and organizational interventions which were going on simultaneously.

Giving a special kind of attention as the basic operating principle of the Discovery Room

1. The child chooses what he or she is going to do, without being urged to do anything particular by the Discovery Room teacher. Self-initiated activities are the first step in "teaching" a child that he or she can become a successful learner. (These activities may include, at times, the activity of doing little or nothing.)

> Kate went right to the masks, which she had been doing for several sessions. She kept warning everybody not to look. And then, out went the lights and on went the flashlights as the witch tried to scare everybody and everybody tried to act scared. Ellis, whose first visit this was (Kate was bringing a different member of her class each time) managed in between times in the dark to try out the scramble cycle, Action Jacksons, horses and cowboys, the play dough machine, and the skillball game.

2. The materials invite handling. They are usually not found in the classroom and cover a wide range in age-level, complexity and sense-involvement. They evoke imaginative play and experiences of mastery and control.

> One day Mel just sawed. A few weeks before, he had made an intricate airplane-like contraption which he called "Superhawk." But this time he threw himself into the physical process of sawing -- fast and furiously cutting back and forth into the wood until one piece after another fell off the board.
>
> Lonnie spent a long time setting up opposing armies of small, plastic red and white knights and their followers. Then he carefully staged the battle, killing off -- one by one -- all but two knights on horseback who then fought it out for victory.

3. The Discovery Room teacher gives intense and meticulous attention to the child. Whatever the child does, as well as the child's appearance, is commented on positively, descriptively and with appreciation and wonder by the teacher. In every action of the child, the Discovery Room teacher finds something that is genuinely praiseworthy and praises it.

> For Karen, working with play dough and the play dough machine was all-absorbing during her first weeks in the Discovery Room. The Discovery Room teacher would say, "Oh, look at what you're pushing out. That's terrific. Look how long it's getting to be. That star shape makes a marvelous rough surface. Oh no, you're not making it longer! I love the way the pink shades into blue. . . ."

4. The child is "given to" in many ways besides positive attention and warm regard. The child is given food (cookies), photographs of himself or herself and occasional small gifts.

> Allen played a lot with the rubbery, finger-size monsters. A blue one with a suction cup was his favorite. He stuck it high up all over the Discovery Room walls and took it down again. He really wanted that monster for his own. The Discovery Room teacher said it could be his present at the next present-giving time just before the winter vacation. Allen talked about it, waited the several weeks, and then when the time came at last, eagerly took it home with him.

5. Talk about personal experiences from home as well as school is accepted as important, although it is not probed. Such topics as friends, enemies, anger, fights, bad language, teeth, hair, birthdays, siblings, birth, death, race, illness, happy times, and so forth are open for discussion. The Discovery Room teacher converses about her own experiences as well. Particular attention is given to separation experiences -- in the Discovery Room, school, or family (if brought up by the child) -- since dealing with the feelings aroused by separation appears to be a locus of difficulty for many of the children. Partings are prepared for, with farewell parties to mark the ending of Discovery Room sessions.

> After the Discovery Room teacher said she would be out of school two days on a visit to her father in California and Malcolm would miss one session, Malcolm told about his father being in California too and his not having seen his father for a long time.

6. Using opportunities which constantly arise, the Discovery Room teacher emphasizes in word and deed that spills can be sponged up, messes cleaned and broken things mended or replaced -- to reinforce the idea that one can wipe up and start over. Mistakes and failures are not final indictments. Setbacks are to be expected. Some things wear out and cannot be fixed. That too is dealt with as a fact of life, not necessarily a matter of personal responsibility or guilt. Coping <u>actively</u> with inconveniences is the focus of this teaching.

> When the steering control mechanism in the new battery-operated cycle stopped working after only three days, the Discovery Room teacher wrote a letter to the manufacturer decrying the poor construction, high price, and over-advertising (most of the children knew the cycle well from TV) of their product. She emphasized that the children had used the cycle with pleasure and care; nevertheless, it had broken. The company sent back a letter and a new cycle. The letters were read to the children and posted in the Discovery Room. The story was told and retold.

The discovery-room approach -- a teacher-child relationship built by "quasi-unconditional" acceptance

A relationship is built quickly through the "quasi-unconditional" acceptance that the Discovery Room teacher gives the child. It is not purely unconditional acceptance, because there are rules and limits in the Discovery Room from the beginning. Moreover, at a later time the Discovery Room teacher uses her relationship with the child to ask for -- through modeling, through expection, through request -- the more mature, responsible, achieving behaviors she thinks the child is capable of.

The child's self-esteem can be raised, once the relationship is established, through the adult's appreciation of what the child is as well as through what the child does. The child's self-image of his or her attributes and potentialities as an attractive, likeable person, who can do, make, and learn things, can be enhanced through the Discovery Room teacher's perceptions of the child, and her helping the child to notice and appreciate the child's own strengths.

More of the child's whole self can be let into the world of school. Home and school can be brought closer together by actively bridging the distance with words. Feelings and actions can be put into words and drawn under greater control. Fantasy life can be included in Discovery Room activities and anxieties can be aired and tamed.

Delight and mastery with things (objects) tend to precede enjoyment and success with symbols. A child beset by reading failure needs to look again, touch again, smell again, hear again, taste again and move again with pleasure, and to do so in school.

"Giving" in many different ways to a child who despairs of competency, helps to fill the huge hole of worthlessness that the child feels inside. Positive regard, food, and material objects are all effective and needed forms of giving. Perhaps because our society so emphasizes rewarding achievement and is so materialistic, giving a person something specific constitutes a kind of proof of self-worth. When a child who does not feel good about himself or herself first starts to value another person or place, the child wants to possess a piece of that person or place. Many small things disappear from the Discovery Room on that basis. When the child comes to feel able to count on the person and the place, then the child can leave the things in the room "to come back to" and can even become a guardian of them there.

Success experiences are not enough for children to become good school learners, they need "successful failure experiences." They need to expect and not be thrown by failure as an inevitable and frequent marker on the road to success. A child's sense of self as inept, clumsy, spoiling everything he or she lays hands on, can come to pervade school activities. Often when things become less alien, less destructible for a child, school learning becomes more possible.

Both in imaginative play and in the relationship to the Discovery Room teacher, some of the themes that recur in the Discovery Room suggest concern with family issues that seem to need further resolution before the role of "school child" can be taken on successfully. Issues involving messing-and-cleaning-up, and control-of-the-adult vs. being-controlled-by-the-adult, appear to hark back to early childhood toilet training. They are more often raised by girls. Issues relating to an intense attachment to the

mother and its relinquishment are more often raised by boys. Movement through these phases via discussion or play often heralds academic improvement and accompanying changes in the Discovery Room toward more controlled and organized behavior -- calmer, less fragmented interest in games, information and skills. Sometimes this is preceded by a kind of loosening up, a relaxation of constriction both with respect to materials and affect.

A child who fights fiercely in school often appears to be carrying over sibling rivalry struggles from home into school. The opportunity to be "chosen" specially by the Discovery Room teacher and to work on this issue on a smaller scale with one partner and one adult in the Discovery Room frequently leads to less fighting in class. What appears to be effective, in the case of fights, is sympathetic listening to detailed accounts of what happened, and then, in the context of acceptance of the child's feelings, examining "how the other fellow may feel" and what the alternatives to physical fighting might be.

Some children show no fantasy play when they first come to the Discovery Room. If imaginative play then starts up in the Discovery Room, the teacher often reports positive changes in the classroom. In other instances, however, children come to the Discovery Room with an active fantasy life which seems to have been kept very separate from the everyday world of reality and which is often extremely repetitive. For these children, playing out the fantasies in the presence of others as well as adding new elements and themes seems salutary.

In summary, the key theoretical assumptions which underlie the Discovery Room procedures are as follows: Through the concentrated positive attention given by the Discovery Room teacher to the child and his or her self-initiated activities in the Discovery Room ("quasi-unconditional" acceptance) a relationship grows quickly between them. Then the child's self-esteem can be raised by the continuing positive attention given by the teacher, by the acceptance given of the whole child (dealing with negative as well as positive sides in ways that do not jeopardize the relationship) and by building the child's capacity to withstand setback and failure on the road to success. The child can come, then, to see himself or herself as a more attractive, likeable person who can do, make and learn things -- and who can have an impact on the world and take responsibility for his or her own actions. When the child has formed a good relationship with the Discovery Room teacher, the child can relate more positively to the classroom teacher. Also, the child can transfer to the classroom some of the more successful learning and social behaviors which were first tried out and consolidated in the Discovery Room. And parents, seeing hopeful changes in their child, can begin to relate more positively to school.

The best Discovery Room materials -- those that children can't keep their eyes and hands off

Children blocked on reading are wary of looking closely at things. Lenses (concave and convex), kaleidoscopes, a rainbow box, three-dimensional viewers and colored glasses are hard to resist. To find out what's inside is intriguing. Nesting dolls and eggs beg to be taken apart down to the smallest one and then put back together. And bringing fresh things into the Discovery Room all the time leads to the habit of searching for what's new ("oh look what you discovered!").

Touching, messing, forming, and making have been pursued relentlessly with play dough and the play dough machine. The child's whole body presses down to push out soft, long shapes. Real clay, sand, fur, a blue liquid inside a flat plastic packet that shoots all over in patterns when squeezed - these are things that get fingers going - and water, water with its myriad possibilities for exploration and calming.

Making sounds, talking, and listening accompany almost everything in the Discovery Room. A thousand phone calls, rung up and answered - ("Hello. Who's this? Oh Mary, is it you? How lovely of you to call. I was just hoping you would come to the Discovery Room soon. Will you? Oh, great! See you soon, Goodbye."). Tunes are played on the African thumb-drum and the xylophone - records on the phonograph. An Indian drum is beaten, a rattle shaken, pull-apart card-

board tubes popped, a heartbeat listened to. Speeches, interviews, songs and strange noises are recorded and played back on the tape recorder. Stories and poems are dictated to the Discovery Room teacher at the typewriter. And conversation goes on all the time.

Woodworking is an ideal Discovery Room activity: sawing, hammering, drilling - cutting up, joining together and boring holes with large muscles involved. Creating three-dimensional objects fast, having many things go wrong which can be set right (like crooked nails or legs that turn out to be uneven), and the possibility of longterm projects when the time is ripe, can all be developed through woodworking.

To scare and be scared in the dark - safely with an adult. These themes draw almost any child to the flashlights and projectors (with slides of plopping bubbles, swirling colors, monsters, bugs, rockets and cartoon filmstrips). Children transform themselves with all manner of dress-up things such as masks, hats, shirts, and jewelry. New roles and new looks are tried out: see your new self in a mirror, find your old self again. The children put on in repertory the classic dramatic plays of childhood: house, store, doctor, and garage. In the Discovery Room, among the most used props are the cash register with a fortune in paper money, the

doctor kit with a real stethoscope, the furnished house and family, and a small garage complete with gas pump, wrecking truck, ambulance, fire engine and assorted cars.

Toys-of-control lead toward self-control: an electric motorcycle directed by remote control, tiny cars which are moved down streets and under bridges by a magnet, a typewriter to explore, balance scale, tinker toy with electric motor, and etch-a-sketch.

Lots of paper for putting things down on paper and making things is essential: painting, drawing, writing, keeping score, stapling, punching holes, stamping out things, and making books. A child's self can be underlined by his or her name and photograph. The label maker prints out stick-on labels and the camera documents the child's widespread doings in the Discovery Room and how fine the child looks. Photographs are both taken home and put up on the walls of the Discovery room.

Taking care of living things, plants and animals, engages almost everyone: bulbs planted in the fall that come up in the spring, cactus, Venus flytrap, tomato plants started in the Discovery Room to take home for the summer. Small turtles have been the best creatures (before they were considered a health hazard) for easy care, for overcoming fears, for handling freely, for surviving, for dealing with death when they died.

When the children turn to games, competition can be fierce but the aggression is bound by agreed-upon rules. Trouble, Battling Tops and Skill-ball have been favorites - getting used to the warm feel of winning and the icy touch of losing, tempered by knowing you'll have another chance to win next time.

Pages with parts to be moved, smelled and touched bring children who have been scared off, back to books. Books galore, especially pop-up books are lent out from the Discovery Room, taken home after school and returned the next day. Picture books, preschool books, myths, legends, folk and fairy-tales are read out-loud by the Discovery Room teacher so that the pleasures of literature can be tasted - and books about life cycle and other concerns of childhood so that the curiosity-satisfying aspect of literature can be enjoyed.

Some consequences of the Discovery Room intervention - planned and unplanned

It is no easy matter for a primary class teacher to turn a child over to somebody else for intensive work. This is especially true since the teacher-child relationship is closer, by and large, with the younger child and classroom success is founded on the teacher's bond with every child in the classroom. Nevertheless, teachers did take their chances and referred to the Discovery Room children whom they felt might benefit from it. Frequently, when a child developed an attachment to the Discovery Room teacher it was followed by a stronger, more positive relationship to the classroom teacher. The greatest improvement in classroom behavior and academic performance occurred when there was much interchange between classroom and

Discovery Room teachers, catching each other in the hall to exchange impressions and events of the day.

Originally, the Discovery Room was conceived by the psychologist of the Baldwin-King Program (Costello) for children who were "turned off" to school learning but who were not difficult to "manage" in the classroom - children who tended to be overlooked. But once the Discovery Room got underway, the children whom teachers referred most urgently were those who were difficult to control in class because of aggressive behavior. We learned that to be useful, assistance must answer first the most pressing problem that the teacher is trying to cope with - help for the most troublesome children in the class (those who act up). This permits moving on to give help for the children who are not thriving in other ways (the quiet resisters and the extremely shy). Thus the selection of children for the Discovery Room was broadened beyond the original conception in response to teachers' needs. It was a classroom teacher who - by referring several of her most timid, retiring youngsters - detected that the Discovery Room could be effective in a relatively short time with extremely shy children and the word was passed around.

Our initial effort was largely directed to third and fourth graders. However, we soon recognized that most of the children were identifiable two or three years earlier even though teachers sometimes did not become highly concerned until school failure was well established. We then paid more attention to younger children and found that earlier intervention tended to affect the child's subsequent career and the teacher's approach to the child.

Two difficulties arose around the Discovery Room. One came up when

teachers withheld Discovery Room sessions as a punishment for poor behavior or not doing work in the classroom. It was tempting because sometimes a child seemed to care so much about going to the Discovery Room that it looked as if the child could be shaped up in this way. But this method did not work where it was most needed. The children with pervasive social, emotional and academic problems could not organize themselves "to be good" under that threat as much as they wanted and valued the Discovery Room. The principal solved this problem by pointing out that the Discovery Room was a regular school assignment irrespective of daily variations in classroom behavior.

A second difficulty came up around the practice of giving gifts and food in the Discovery Room. Some staff felt that giving to the very children who were not behaving well or performing well academically was unfair to the majority of children who were trying hard and doing much better, yet not receiving "rewards." They felt this "giving" could lead to undesirable consequences for the school. The Discovery Room teacher volunteered to present the Discovery Room approach in detail to all the staff, to discuss the issue of giving, and to follow the consensus of the group after a full explanation of her reasons. After the presentation and discussion, it became clear that staff views ranged widely from a few who still felt that giving treats was detrimental, to those who felt that giving to children with great needs was helpful to them and could be understood and accepted by others. Even though no consensus was attained, the frank discussion of divergent staff views served to increase understanding and acceptance on all sides both of the Discovery Room, its methods and goals, and of the doubts and difficulties engendered by such an approach in school.

Mutual consultation characterizes the continuing collaboration between the Yale Child Study Center and Martin Luther King School on a number of projects. For the Discovery Room, it has led to vigorous staff and parental support for construction of a room for the Discovery Room in the overcrowded school as well as interest in and input to a grant proposal for funding a discovery-room research and training project. Direct participation of staff and parents will be relied on - as in past and ongoing projects (Winters, 1975; Schraft and O'Connell, 1976) - in the further development, evaluation and dissemination of the discovery-room approach.

Studies relating to the discovery-room approach

The role of the teacher in raising the self-esteem of the child (becoming a self-esteem regulator) through positive attention to the child is derived from work on counseling and dyadic relationships (Rogers, 1961; Bennis, et al, 1968; I. Janis, 1975). The teacher-child relationship is

frequently cited as the most powerful influence for positive change in school behavior (Brodie and Mattick, 1970; Chall, 1967; Mattick and Murphy, 1973; Shapiro and Biber, 1973; Stone and Janis, 1973). Much work has supported the developmental importance of separation experiences (Bowlby, 1973; Janis, 1964) and the constructive role of imaginative play for the preschool and young school child has been explored in the studies of Singer (1973).

The educational psychology and philosophy underlying the discovery-room intervention is embodied in the developmental-interaction approach of Biber and her associates with its emphasis on self concept, the interdependence of cognitive and affective development, the important role of play, and the teacher as significant adult (Biber, 1961; Biber and Franklin, 1967; Shapiro and Biber, 1973):

> ". . .the child's sense of himself as unique and independent is constructed from his experiences with objects and other people. . . .
>
> "The school is seen as responsible for fostering the child's psychological development in a broad sense, as encompassing affective and social as well as cognitive development. . . .
>
> ". . .the growth of cognitive functions. . .cannot be separated from the growth of personal and interpersonal processes -- the development of self-esteem and a sense of identity, internalization of impulse control, capacity for autonomous response, relatedness to other people."

> ". . .for the young child play represents the child's symbolic reconstruction of reality, a way of finding out how things go together and, through role playing, experimenting with the expression of feelings and types of interpersonal relationships.
>
> "The teacher is the significant adult who transmits to the children what they are supposed to learn, and whose relationship with them mediates their learning. In the developmental-interaction view, the teacher is one of the significant others through whom the child learns to view himself." (Shapiro and Biber, 1973.)

Among recent mental health programs for elementary school children, most closely bearing on the discovery-room approach is the long-term Primary Mental Health Project (PMHP) of Cowen and his associates (1975). In PMHP, nonprofessional child aides, who are trained and supervised by mental health professionals, work with maladapted primary school children twice a week in a playroom in the school. "At the core of the aide's contact with the child is a committed human relation" (Cowen, 1971, p. 726). Although the discovery-room intervention was developed more recently, independently, and is directed to teachers, both the discovery-room approach and PMHP offer the child with early school difficulties an accepting relationship with an adult and an opportunity to explore and play imaginatively with materials.

The discovery-room approach differs from PMHP in its emphasis on certain themes which we have found to be important for the classroom functioning of children who have worked in the Discovery Room. These themes include: dealing with failure and setback (wiping up, fixing, finding, replacing, having many chances) -- relating to materials and "things" (enjoying, using, owning, borrowing, caring for) -- and handling

separation experiences. The focus of PMHP is on expanding the reach of mental health professionals in the school for secondary prevention. The potential contribution of the discovery-room intervention is that it can be made directly available to regular teachers. If classroom teachers can be given methods of helping children who are often referred to specialists, they will be able to contribute to mental health in the school through primary prevention.

For the future: a discovery-room model for the classroom

The original format for the discovery-room approach has been a special teacher working with children twice-weekly in a special room. We propose to develop a second format by training a core group of primary school teachers in the discovery-room approach who will collaborate in constructing a discovery-room model for the classroom.

In these days of economizing in the schools, it is all the more urgent to translate any worthwhile intervention wherever possible into a form directly usable by classroom teachers. The basic elements of the discovery-room approach -- centering as they do on the teacher-child relationship, variety of materials and strengthening self concept -- are at hand for all teachers to use. The recent trend toward "mainstreaming" of handicapped children places added demands upon classroom teachers. We believe that the discovery-room approach will be able to increase the awareness and ability of classroom teachers to help children with special needs and will contribute to their becoming better teachers for all the children in their classrooms.

The discovery-room approach opens up the possibility of utilizing the teacher-child relationship itself -- conceptualized as a two-person, two-way, modifiable interaction -- to initiate positive change. The teacher's accepting and admiring perception of the child (conveyed through positive attention to specific activities and aspects of the child) raises the child's self-esteem, while the search for what is praiseworthy in the child on the part of the teacher, as well as the child's responses, enhance the teacher's image of the child. Teacher and child discover new dimensions in themselves and in the other, thus launching the relationship on a favorable course. In this sense the discovery-room approach <u>makes room for discovery</u> in both teacher and child.

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